



Foundation of America, Inc.

June 4, 2001

The Honorable John Dingell  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2328 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

The Lupus Foundation of America (LFA) supports the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001 (H.R. 526 and S. 283). The LFA represents 1,400,000 Americans who suffer from lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease that causes the immune system to attack the body's own cells.

Most victims of lupus are women with the highest prevalence among women of color. Lupus is a very complicated disease that presents itself in different ways affecting multiple organ systems. Lupus can attack connective tissue and vital organs, including the joints, kidneys, heart, lungs, brain, blood, or skin. Disease activity is unpredictable and can range from mild to life-threatening.

Many different medical specialists, sophisticated tests, medications, and specialized equipment are required to treat lupus. According to a survey of LFA members, one in three receive their medical care through a managed-care health plan. Therefore, the LFA supports the enactment of a strong patient's bill of rights.

The Lupus Foundation of America believes people with lupus enrolled in a managed-care health plan should be allowed to name their lupus specialist as their primary care physician. They should have immediate access to the specialists and specialty care they need, even if those specialists are outside of the provider network. They should not have to go through a lengthy or complicated appeals process to receive specialized care. People with lupus also should be able to seek emergency care when they reasonably believe their health is in danger.

The LFA believes that the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001 (H.R. 526 and S. 283) offers people with lupus the kinds of protections they need. We urge Congress to enact this important legislation quickly so lupus patients can receive prompt access to quality, life-saving health care.

Sincerely,

Duane L. Peters  
Vice President for Advocacy